
FIRE FACT NO. 063 CHECKLIST(s) : 06

TITLE : NEW SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION

CHECKLIST ITEM(s) : 06-01

REFERENCE(s) : K.S.A. 31-134, 31-144, 31-150, AGO 87-9, 86-81, 80-14, 79-28

PAGE 1 of 2

The term “school building” refers to any building or structure built on the property of a school or used by a school. This includes elementary and secondary schools, colleges, universities, and trade schools and covers both public and private institutions.

The Kansas Fire Prevention Code requires any new school building construction project to comply with the 2000 edition of the International Building Code. This includes new buildings, additions to existing buildings, and renovations and remodeling projects in existing buildings that alter or change the occupancy of a building or alter the exiting, fire resistance, or structural integrity of a building. For example, relocating a program for children aged 2 ½ to 5 years of age into a building that was previously used for K-12 education is a change of occupancy.

New K –12 schools may be occupied after a code footprint, fire alarm drawings, and a certificate of occupancy, fire suppression equipment drawings and testing certificates have been submitted to and accepted by the Kansas State Fire Marshal.

New school construction must be approved by the Kansas Department of Education (KSDE) prior to the start of any work. The only exceptions are projects at Kansas Regents facilities and small remodeling projects that KSDE determines will not be reviewed. Projects involving ADA and any accessibility issues shall be submitted to KSDE. Documentation of KSDE approval or documentation that plans have been appropriately submitted shall be available for on-site review by inspecting authorities.

Plans for this construction must be prepared by an architect or engineer licensed in Kansas. Architects and engineers shall certify that the new school construction complies with the International Building Code and related codes. This certification is made by the designer by preparing plans with the licensed designer’s seal.

The statutory responsibility for code compliance in new school construction remains with the licensed design professional whose seal is on the plans. This is true regardless of whether or not any plan review was conducted. No statutory liability is transferred to any Code Authority. The International Building Code addresses building safety and does not specifically address many site issues.

New school construction is not subject to any local amendments of the Uniform Building Code. Separate and/or additional requirements of the Life Safety Code not found in the Uniform Building Code are not applicable to new school construction. For more on this, refer to Attorney General Opinions 87-9 and 86-81.



Kansas State Fire Marshal Prevention Division

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PAGE 2 of 2

When plans for new construction are reviewed by KSDE or KSFMO, they are typically limited to less than 8 hours and are cursory in nature. The focus of the KSFMO is on what is known as the ENDSS protocol (exiting, notification, detection, separation, and suppression) and is meant to identify deviations from the adopted codes prior to construction. Any identified deviations must either be clarified or corrected by the designer to the satisfaction of the reviewing authority prior to construction.

The school owner and the designer or engineer shall work with local authorities towards resolving fire department access, water supply, zoning requirements, and drainage issues. Local authorities may require a school site to provide fire department access and adequate water supplies or allow the option for the building to be fully sprinklered to compensate for these requirements.

THE LOCAL JURISDICTION'S ROLE

In areas where a building official is present, a plan review, a building permit, inspections, and a certificate of compliance are required in accordance to state adopted code. In areas without a building official, an authorized representative of the Kansas State Fire Marshal may inspect for code compliance and allow the new construction to be occupied or continued in operation.

If a conflict in interpretation occurs between the local building or fire authorities and State approved construction documents, the issue should be immediately brought to the State Department of Education School Facilities Office at 785-296-2627. The State Fire Marshal may interpret unresolved issues.

